The Role of Peptides and Amino Acids as Neurotransmitters

Progress in Clinical and Biological Research, volume 68

by J.B. Lombardini and A.D. Kenny

Alan R. Liss; New York, 1981
xiv + 226 pages. £24.60

The material contained in this volume of Progress in Clinical and Biological Research hails from a symposium at Texas Tech, University Health Sciences Centre in October 1980 and as such is somewhat off the boil. However, many of the contributions are still valuable for the lucid way in which they present the pioneering work of the seventies that has laid the framework for current research. Thus the opening chapters by Johnston and McLennan on GABA receptors and excitatory amino acid receptors, respectively, would hardly seem out of data as recent reviews. Likewise, Hiller admirably charts the advances of his own group and others in the opioid receptor field. The rather more meandering chapter on taurine clearly reflects the difficulties in elucidating the functions of this enigmatic substance. Studies on the behavioural effects of thyrotropin-releasing hormone in the CNS are well to the fore in the chapter by Breese and colleagues while the contribution of immunohistochemical techniques is evident in Zimmerman's chapter on peptide pathways in the basal ganglia. It is perhaps strange considering the book's title to find a chapter on the muscarinic actions of acetylcholine in the CNS but this contribution by Krnjević, which illustrates the important role he himself has played, is one of the most interesting, particularly in view of the way work on 'M'-currents has blossomed in the last year or two.

The remainder of the book, just over a third in fact, is allotted to short experimental papers. Although individual contributions will be of great interest to the specialist this section will not be of such value to the general reader as the preceding review chapters.

Overall this is a book with some very worthwhile material though it is not comprehensive enough to be recommended as a general text on peptides and amino acids in the CNS.

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AAS 13: Pharmacology of Asthma

Edited by J. Morley and K.D. Rainsford

Birkhäuser; Basel, Boston, Stuttgart, 1983
288 pages. SFr 78.00 (about £27)

I am very pleased to have this useful book on my shelves. It contains the proceedings of a workshop held at the Cardiothoracic Institute in London on March 16th and 17th, 1982, so publication has been pretty rapid. A number of important new advances in the subject were reviewed by a distinguished range of participants, mostly British but some from the European mainland. They considered four principal aspects of asthma: mechanisms of airway hypersensitivity (with particular reference to exercise-induced asthma and the idea that the critical feature is airway cooling); the therapeutic role of methylxanthines; the pharmacology of phospholipid metabolites implicated as pathophysiological mediators (platelet activating factor, a little bit on leukotrienes and the roles of prostaglandin synthesis and its inhibition by aspirin-like drugs) and beta adrenoceptors.